

Who killed Tamara Greene ?

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Evidence suggests the stripper may have been slain

by an angry drug dealer, was not victim of a cover-up

DETROIT

Her real name was **Tamara Greene** , an arresting, thick-bodied stripper known as Strawberry. By now her death is the stuff of Detroit legend, a whodunit of sex and politics and power.

The most incredible plot is a simple one: She is said to have danced at a party at the mayor's mansion and was executed because she knew too much.

The party, of course, has never been proven, and the facts about **Greene** , as told by investigators, friends and family members, reveal something far less sinister. A portrait emerges of a woman **who** ran with bad men and died with two black eyes.

Greene , 27, was Detroit murder victim No. 113 in 2003. There were 366 homicides in the city that year, just half of those resolved. At first, her death was considered an ordinary blue-collar murder -- a drive-by job -- in a city with too many of them. She died in a hail of bullets, slumped over her steering wheel, her eyeglasses broken, the car still in drive, creeping down the street.

Her murder case went cold; a suspect was never publicly identified.

Then the mayor's spectacular political troubles began, and **Greene** became the mystery woman whose noir life took on mythological proportions. It begins with a former homicide investigator **who** says he is convinced that the disgraced mayor and his cronies in the Police Department are crooks and killers.

The case of her death was resurrected earlier this month, when that investigator, former Detroit Police Lt. Alvin Bowman, claimed that police brass squelched his inquiry into the supposed party at the Manoogian Mansion in late fall 2002 and **Greene** 's murder in April 2003 because he got too close to making a connection. The Detroit Police Department has reopened the case as has the Wayne County prosecutor.

"I suspect that the shooter was a law enforcement officer, and more specifically, a Detroit Police Department officer," Bowman said in an affidavit. Reached by telephone, he elaborated: "She wanted money to stay quiet and they wouldn't give it to her."

And yet no evidence from the early morning crime scene suggests that any police officers were involved. According to police reports, the medical examiner's findings and investigators, it is most likely that **Greene** was done in by Detroit's wild streets.

In early April, two weeks before her murder, **Greene** had danced for a corroborated party of men. That party was held at the Residence Inn in Southfield, a run-down motor lodge modeled after a Swiss chalet. The party was attended by known drug dealers, hooligans and other all-stars of city life, authorities say.

Greene got into an altercation with a small man -- 5 1/2 feet tall -- with a big ego and a record for trafficking cocaine. He wanted sex. She refused. He punched her once in the eye, then punched her once in the other eye.

That's when **Greene** 's boyfriend, Eric "Big E" Mitchell, stepped in, according to statements both Mitchell and a stripper named Taquela Anjema Bates gave police. The two men had an altercation, the bigger man winning. The Southfield police responded to the fight, but by then, the principals had left.

Nevertheless, the glove had been thrown. Disrespect had been committed.

The addresses and phone numbers for Mitchell and Bates have gone stale. Mitchell recently re-emerged in Romulus, where he was arrested on felony drug charges. The Residence Inn is under new management and has a new name. A lot changes in six years.

Greene led a 'wild life'

Tamara Greene grew up on Detroit's east side, graduating from Martin Luther King Jr. Senior High School in 1994. She had her first child, Jonathan Bond, when she was 17 years old. She gave birth to her second child, Ashly, when she was 19 and her third, India, when she was 26.

The first two children live with their fathers and the youngest with **Greene** 's brother.

A \$150 million federal lawsuit has been filed on Jonathan's behalf, charging primarily that police executives sank the investigation, preventing her murderer from being caught, though not claiming a City Hall role in her death. Taris Jackson, the father of her second child, has followed with a claim on **Greene** 's estate should any money be forthcoming from the oldest child's suit.

It is unclear when **Greene** took to the street life, began stripping or working as an escort. Her price, according to confidant and lawyer Dennis Mitchenor, was \$500 "just to look" and hundreds more "to touch," he said. Voluptuous and regal, **Greene** would quickly become a superstar in the sex-charged world of politics, business and the streets.

"God gave her that body and she knew how to use it," Mitchenor said.

"If there was a high rollers' party, she was definitely the girl to be there. It was a wild life, though. She changed (cell) numbers like a drug dealer."

Greene had a taste for dangerous men, according to those **who** knew her. She ran under the aliases Veronica, Linda and Laurie, and of course her professional name Strawberry. She served as a front for check-kitters, drug kingpins and the like. She drove a \$70,000 BMW leased under her grandmother's name and freely lent it to her coterie of suspicious men, thus allowing them to drive around unmolested by police.

"I didn't know the full extent of what she was doing, but she didn't deserve this," said her grandmother, Bertha Powell, of Columbus, Ohio. "Tammy was not a bad person. She told me she got beat up at a party. I told her to come home and let her face heal. Of course she didn't come."

Boyfriend was shot, too

A week after the party with the 5 1/2 -foot drug dealer, the BMW was shot up, a car **Greene** had loaned to her paramour, Mitchell. No one was in the car that time. Powell would eventually assume payments of the car and sell it at a substantial loss.

Constantly in need of money, **Greene** accepted a dancing engagement the week she was beaten.

"You can't dance tonight, you've got black eyes," Mitchenor remembered telling her. "She said she had to do what she had to do. She did the party in sunglasses. It was something of an occupational hazard."

In the early morning of April 30, **Greene** and Mitchell left the All-Star club on Eight Mile where she worked as a stripper. It was 3:40 a.m. The couple idled outside his home on Roselawn near West Outer Drive in the Bagley section of Detroit. A large white SUV turned the corner, a hand holding a pistol out the window.

Mitchell saw the man.

"Light-skinned," he described the shooter to police that morning, like the short man he had the fight with a few weeks before. Mitchell, 6 feet tall and 265 pounds, ducked for cover into the foot-well of the Buick Skylark. He said nothing to **Greene**. She was struck three times, according to the medical examiner's report: once behind the left ear, once through the jaw, and once through the left arm and chest. Mitchell was struck by five bullets, including once in the neck, according to official reports.

Mitchell staggered around the street, knocked on a neighbor's door (the neighbor threatened to shoot him), then made a call to a friend. The hit man never returned to finish him off. Hardly the mark of a professional.

Ex-cop stands by his words

Still, Bowman, the former Detroit police lieutenant, insisted it was a professional police job. He pointed to the fact that .40-caliber ammunition was used.

"I stand by what I said. Police-issued Glocks use .40-caliber ammunition," he said in a rambling telephone interview.

Glock does, in fact, manufacture handguns that fire .40-caliber ammunition, but so does Smith and Wesson and a slew of other gun manufacturers. Bowman said he did not remember if ballistic tests have been made on the casings to determine the specific brand of gun. In fact, they have not.

Greene was struck 18 times from a moving vehicle, Bowman said. Yet the medical examiner's report shows she was struck just three times and just 12 bullets casings were found at the scene, according to the police report that morning.

With all the discrepancies, is it not possible that he could be wrong? Bowman was asked. It is his theory, after all, that the street corners and the corridors of power intersected **Tamara Greene** 's doorstep. It is his theory that has launched a thousand barstool conspiracies.

There was a prolonged silence. Then Bowman offered this: "To be perfectly honest, it's like an octopus's tentacles that spread all over. Once you see it, once you connect the dots, it's obvious."

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Correction: Taris Jackson, the father of deceased dancer Tamara Greene 's second child, has established an estate that would collect judgments from any lawsuits on behalf of all of Greene 's children. A story on 1A Friday incorrectly described his actions regarding the estate.

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